

'KEEPER STUNNED BUT WYCOMBE HIT BACK TO TRIUMPH

By "Nova"

Wycombe Wanderers 3, Tooting & Mitcham 1

WITH goalkeeper Phil Patrick suffering from concussion and playing in a daze on the left-wing for all but six minutes of the second half, Wycombe Wanderers amazed their followers at Loakes Park on Saturday with a great comeback to snatch a courageous victory over highly-placed Tooting.

It was not until Patrick's injury, when he daringly dived at the feet of the Tooting centre-forward, Mick Browning, just after half-time, that Wycombe seemed to have any desire to win. But once Gale stormed through for the equaliser, the only doubt that remained was whether Tooting could hold out. The next 40 minutes or so proved they could not, and goals from Paul Hodges and late substitute John Thomas clinched a magnificent victory.

After recent pathetic performances, this result was a tremendous morale booster. It showed without doubt that courage and commonsense play an enormous part in the result of every game.

THE TWO HEROES

With only ten fit men, the Wanderers' players displayed both. But the two men who stood out most were Phil Patrick and Tony Horseman. Despite being knocked out and suffering from quite severe concussion, Patrick insisted on coming back onto the field. His presence meant that at least one Tooting player had to mark him—just in case he was

not as dazed as he appeared!

When Patrick was injured few people imagined that the man who would take his place in goal would be Horseman, — almost the shortest player on the field and, apart from that, Wycombe's most dangerous forward.

It seemed that Wycombe would be weakened both in the forward line and in the defence, but this was not the case. Horseman the elusive forward became Horseman the goalkeeper—and a very good one at that.

Commonsense showed through during the moments of crisis in the second half. Brilliant John Beck led the way, letting the ball do the work, and Gale, with confidence flowing steadily back with every kick, Dave Thomas, more determined than usual, the calm Alistair Lewis, and the relentless Pete Roystone all followed his fine example.

TOOTING LEAD

In the first half nothing went right for Wycombe. Horseman put Hodges through only minutes after the start but somehow goalkeeper Pearson managed to push his shot round the post for a corner. Then play switched ends and a right-wing move between Browning and Roy Agar ended in copybook fashion with Northcott shooting into an unguarded net.

After concerted spells of Tooting attacks John Thomas, deputising for the 'flu'-struck Pullin, latched onto a through ball but was brought down inside the penalty area by the long-legged Roy Bambridge. But Beck shot past the post from the penalty spot!

The remainder of the first half was a series of atrocious misses and mistakes by Wycombe, and few people would have given them any kind of chance in the second half. Two minutes after the restart however, Gale burst through in his old fashion and a tremendous shot found the net before goalkeeper Pearson could move.

Three minutes later Beck moved upfield and hit another terrific shot into the side netting. Then came the incident that should have meant a certain Tooting victory. Patrick dived fearlessly at the feet of Browning and was knocked out. After several minutes he was taken off, and Horseman took over in goal.

The Wanderers' defenders at first shielded Horseman, but soon found the Tooting forwards—ex-Wanderer Tony Chapman included—so harmless that they could play their normal game. Thomas and Gale pressed ever forward, while the bustling John Thomas and the lanky Merrick constantly menaced the heart of the Tooting defence.

Patrick returned on the left wing, and twice went close, with a header and a shot, before Wycombe went ahead for the first time.

John Thomas, who, with a little more speed and experience, could fit quite nicely into the Wanderers' senior line-up, worried Pearson into dropping the ball and Hodges, playing a roving role, hit the loose ball into the net.

Even this failed to move disappointing Tooting to any great effort. Their forwards were disinclined to shoot and Horseman had only two direct efforts to stop throughout. But he was so confident it looked as if he had been playing in goal all his life. The only Tooting player who seemed likely to score was right-back Holder but his efforts to put some life into his colleagues were wasted and in injury time Wycombe added a third through John Thomas, after a goalmouth melee.